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Testimony

Sen. Len Fasano

Public Health Committee

March 2, 2016

SB 294 An Act Concerning Services for Individuals with Intellectual Disability

Senator Gerrantana, Representative Ritter, Senator Markley, Representative Srinivasan and members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 294 An Act Concerning Services for Individuals with Intellectual Disability.

Connecticut must do a better job meeting the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. A core function of government is to help those who are most vulnerable and to ensure everyone and every family has the opportunity to live life to the fullest.

I thank the Committee for raising the bill before us today as it seeks to address many of the shortcomings within the state's current support system by increasing fairness, transparency and accountability in state services.

I also applaud all the advocates and families who have come to the Capitol day after day to share their stories with lawmakers. They have committed themselves to fighting for change not just for their loved ones, but for all families who struggle to meet the needs of their children. I thank both DDS Families First and The Arc for their passionate commitment for reform. They are fighting for change and bringing their ideas together. Because of their hard work, I believe our state is on the right path to make a difference.

Today, I would like to share my support for many of the proposals in this legislation, and also share my support for many of the questions that the families who care for those with disabilities every day have brought to your attention today.

Regarding the waiting lists for services, we must do a better job as a state managing these lists and keeping families informed. The current proposal before us today would move us forward by making the following changes to current law:

- The legislation would require the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to provide individuals on the waiting list with much more information than is currently available. It would require each individual get a complete copy of the level of need assessment. This would include scoring results, comments, a summary report and any other related information or documents.

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- This legislation would require DDS to provide information on the individual's priority status and the amount of funding budgeted for each service provided by the department. This would allow individuals and families to know more about where they stand on the waiting list and the costs of the services they need.
- This legislation would also prevent the Department from removing an individual from the wait list without their consent.
- Separate from the state's waiting list, this proposal would also require DDS provide at least 90 days' notice to individuals with intellectual disabilities who will have their state-assisted care ended. Additionally, it would require the agency to identify and secure private funding for care or services required by the individual relating to his or her intellectual disability.

I applaud the committee for raising this bill, but I also wholeheartedly agree with the additional concerns shared by families and advocates. After meeting with many of these passionate individuals this morning, my staff is now working on language that clarifies many detailed changes that would strengthen this bill. I will be submitting language for an amendment that addresses many of these complicated issues including a waiting list census, definitions, enhanced documentation when services are denied, and other concerns.

I also would like to state for the record that I believe the section of this bill regarding the Southbury Training School does not belong in this bill. I would ask that the Committee remove the language related to this issue from the bill so that it does not distract or deter supporters of the other proposals included in this legislation from supporting the overall bill as a whole.

I look forward to continuing the dialogue with the Committee based on the feedback shared by the families and advocates today. This is an incredible opportunity for us to come together and make a real difference in the lives of those with disabilities and their families.



Len Fasano
Senate Minority Leader